

GRAND RIVER FOCUS AREA

Delta Township Non-Motorized Transportation Plan Basis for Preliminary Recommendations

Non-motorized trails and greenways are becoming very popular throughout the country. They are fast becoming part of the “green infrastructure” for healthy walkable communities. Trails and Greenways are generally recognized as one of components that contribute to increasing real estate sales and values 7-15% according to National Geographic Magazine. They also contribute to a healthy life style, promote socialization and provide an alternate form of transportation from the automobile. One of the main purposes of a non-motorized system is to connect parks, neighborhoods, municipal services, schools and retail centers. For these reasons, the creation of trails and greenways are in the best interest and long-term welfare of the community.

The Delta Township Non-motorized Transportation Plan (NMTP) has identified the need for “off-road” routes in an East / West direction along the Grand River in both the north and southern portions of the Township. The northern portion of that route is the most populated area of the township. The southern route is also mostly developed along the Grand River. Because both areas are mostly developed the opportunity for creating a new “off-road” non-motorized corridors is very limited. Although non-motorized improvements along roadways are a primary objective of the plan, they do not offer the highest quality recreational experience. In addition, both areas are in alignment with the proposed future “River Trail” that has been developing throughout the City of Lansing for the past 25 years. It is conceivable that both sections might someday connect to the City’s trail system, which currently connects to Michigan State University, City of East Lansing and Meridian Township, with future plans to connect to the City of Williamston and beyond. Trail development along the northern tier of Delta Township would allow connection to the City of Grand Ledge, who is also contemplating a trail system. Lansing’s priority at the present time is to connect to Delhi Township on its southern border, which is proposed to continue to the City of Mason and beyond. Therefore, the “North Grand River” and “South Grand River” trail concept appear to meet this long-term regional goal, which is currently supported by many of the surrounding Mid-Michigan communities.

However, there are significant challenges to this idea. First, the land where the trail / greenway is proposed is privately held. Secondly, many existing residents do not favor this idea and appear unwilling to provide easements. There is however a minority of landowners that favor the trail and are willing to grant easements for future trail development. Therefore, this project will require education and patience for it to become reality. This is why this project is proposed as a phase three along the southern portion of the Grand River. The northern portion is scheduled as a phase two to connect the parks and then a phase three to continue to the west. It will take significant time to acquire easements and will be costly to construct.

Delta Township Board of Trustees requested that the consultants, Landscape Architects and Planners, Inc. (LAP) host a set of Citizen Input Meetings designed to focus on the “off-road” routes. The North - South Routes commonly referred to as the “Grand River Corridor” was identified as a potential route during the conceptual development phase of the planning process. Following the

Citizen Input meeting held on September 16, 2004, LAP collected and analyzed comments made by citizens. For specific comments please refer to the "Summary of Comments" which is attached.

The following is a written response to questions and comments raised during the Citizen Input Meeting and provides a basis for recommendations for this specific non-motorized route.

RESPONSE TO CITIZENS COMMENTS

1. Security: Trails are generally safe. Statistics have shown trails to be as safe as the neighborhoods in which they are constructed. Crime statistics are generally not related to the trails but more to the land uses near the trails. In Mid Michigan trail statistics are lacking, however reports from local police departments do not indicate there is significant crime on any of the Mid Michigan trails and many indicate "no crime" being reported at all.
2. Privately Owned Land: The Grand River parcels for the most part are privately held land. The only way to develop a trail is by obtaining the private land and placing it in public ownership. It is our recommendation that this only be done by purchase or donation. We do not recommend using eminent domain or condemnation for this purpose. The act of acquisition using these methods would undermine the intent and spirit of the trail and its intended use. Riparian rights come with the landowner's bundle of rights. Riparian rights cannot be granted without the owner's permission through an easement or purchase. It is unlikely; the township will commit the funds to purchase private land without receiving some type of grants from the State of Michigan a corporation or a private foundation.
3. Floodplain / Wetland: The Grand River is naturally associated with floodplain and wetlands. A pathway cannot be developed in a floodplain or wetland without obtaining a Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) and United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Joint Permit from the State of Michigan. This type of permit requires a separate public review process from Delta Township's planning process. The permit requires a hydrological analysis of the river corridor and specific computer modeling before such a permit could be granted. It also requires an environmental impact study of both flora and fauna. Rigorous design standards must be met before any such permit would be granted. Pervious versus non-pervious surfaces (trail material) would also be evaluated during this process as well as any vertical obstructions.
4. Drain Commissioner Jurisdiction: The Eaton County Drain Commissioner has jurisdiction in many tributaries flowing into the Grand River. It would be necessary to coordinate this project with his agency when contemplating the design of this type of project.
5. Design Criteria: It is recommended that current design criteria be used to design the trail. This would include, American Disability Act, (ADA - barrier free), American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) and others that are common for public trails.
6. Lighting: Lighting is not recommended along the trail. The hours of operation for trails are generally from dawn to dusk. The need for lighting usually appears only in densely populated areas where use is promoted after dark such as near downtown centers, retail areas, and

event venues. This area of Delta Township does not fit this use since it is primarily a residential community.

7. Noise: Non-motorized trails are generally quiet. Noise usually becomes a factor if large events are scheduled on the trail or if they are motorized. Neither of which are being proposed for this segment of the trail. Occasional barking dog or people voices are the main source of noise. Enforcement of regulations can control most of these disturbances.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE GRAND RIVER

1. Material: Consider the entire range of trail surfaces when planning this section. Don't assume that asphalt is the only choice. If strollers and/or roller blades are a primary factor then asphalt may be the material for choice, but others should be considered in the design process based upon potential uses.
2. Easements: Solicit easements by working with existing or future landowners. Determine criteria that will allow the Township to enter into negotiations with landowners, such as; fair value policies, donations, gifts, hold-harmless clauses, conservation practices and other land acquisition policies. Work with landowners to better understand their needs so that land donation becomes a benefit to them as well as to the community.
3. Conservation Practices: Use the most up to date conservation practices when developing a trail along the waterways of Delta Township. Enhance and/or avoid sensitive natural features whenever possible. Use interpretation and education whenever possible to allow for greater appreciation of our natural resources. Develop conservation policies that protect and enhance the natural systems associated with this area.
4. Trail Heads: Discourage the development of large trailheads in neighborhoods. Concentrate on intimate connections to neighborhoods and destinations. Encourage the use by local community residents.
5. Other Agencies: Communicate with and utilize the expertise of other agencies (Drain Commissioner, Road Commission, Police Department, Public Service Dept. Parks Dept. and others) during the design, development and management of this trail system.
6. Screening: Provide adequate setbacks and generous screening or buffers between the trail and the adjacent property owner. Use vertical barriers, fencing or similar means to provide and create privacy where requested.
7. Patrols: Provide adequate police patrols and neighborhood watch programs from the initial stages of development. Add a bicycle patrol component to the police program. Allow designated neighbors to participate in the patrol of the trails and greenways and encourage communication and participation.

8. Maintenance Program: Designate the area as a Township Park and allow the Parks Dept. to manage the property. The trail will require regular trash pick up, sweeping and plowing. Provide the personnel and equipment necessary to perform these functions.

FUTURE ACTIONS

In an effort to conclude the Non-Motorized Transportation Planning process, the following outline recommends additional steps to follow after the Master Plan is adopted that will allow more in-depth analysis of these specific routes.

Overall Non-Motorized Transportation Planning Process (Main Categories)

- ❑ Master Plan – Currently in Process
- ❑ Study / Design Development – Design of Specific Areas Based on Priorities and additional community input.
- ❑ Funding – Application for Grants and/or Allocation of Local Funds
- ❑ Implementation – Construction Plans, Bidding and Construction
- ❑ Maintenance and Post Evaluation – Township to Provide Maintenance and Monitor Procedures

Non-Motorized Transportation Projected General Phasing

Phase 1 – Red Routes on Master Plan	0-20 years
Phase 2 – Yellow Routes on Master Plan	21-35
Phase 3 – Orange Routes on Master Plan	36-49
Phase 4 – Green Routes on Master Plan	50+

General Phasing Recommendations for Grand River North

- A. Develop trails within the existing parks near the river such as Grand Woods, Hawk Meadow and Delta Mills. A trail has been recently developed in Hunter's Orchard Park. Use these as examples to persuade future land acquisitions for trails.
- B. Solicit Easements from Property Owners to allow for the Future Development of the trail
- C. After easements are in place connect parkland and neighborhoods
- D. Pursue future phases to the west along the Grand River ultimately to Grand Ledge.

General Phasing Recommendations for Grand River South

- E. Work with Woldumar Nature Center and Anderson Nature Park to develop a trail system that is compatible with their existing trails and programs.
- F. Solicit Easements from Property Owners to allow for the Future Development of the trail along the Grand River. Where easements are not available consider connecting back to Old Lansing Road during the interim transition period.
- G. After easements are in place connect parkland and neighborhoods
- H. Connect to the multi-use path proposed along Creyts Road and ultimately to Diamonddale.

Design Recommendations for the Grand River North / South

Easements and Land Acquisitions

- A. Acquire Easements from Land Owners on a Voluntary Basis
- B. Do not Use Eminent Domain or Condemnation

- C. Allow time for landowners (possibly future landowners) to grow accustomed to trails and greenways through example in other portions of the township and lead by example.

Study Phase

- A. Ownership – Designate an Agency to take Charge (Park Dept. etc.)
- B. Obtain the following information
 - 1. Boundary Survey
 - 2. Topographic Survey
 - 3. Tree Survey
 - 4. Ecological Survey
 - 5. Hydrological Data
- C. Analyze Data
- D. Produce a Preliminary Design
- E. Determine Policies to Govern the Trail

Design Development

- A. Meet with Citizens to discuss design parameters
 - a. Trail Location within the Public Right of Way
 - b. Individual Access to Trail from Adjacent Property Owners (only if desired)
 - c. Privacy Issues – fencing, landscaping, setbacks, etc.
- B. Design Issues
 - a. Vehicle deterrents – bollards, gates, barriers, etc.
 - b. Drainage – trench drains, culverts, catch basins, etc.
 - c. Road Crossings and or Intersections
 - d. Signs (location, type, size etc.)
 - e. Amenities (benches, trail markers, exercise stations, etc.)
 - f. Materials – (asphalt, concrete, limestone, cinders, etc.)
 - g. Sizes – (width, depth of materials, setbacks, etc.)

Determine Operation Procedures

- A. Operation Procedures
 - a. Hours of Operation – Dawn to Dusk
 - b. Maintenance Schedule – Personnel and Equipment
 - c. Security – Police and Citizen Patrols
 - d. Support – Trails Group / Citizen Design Review Committee